

TEXAS CATTLE

OCT 18 1917

SYNOPSIS OF FILM

1. Herding Sheep.
2. On a Cattle Ranch.
3. Cattlemen.
4. Native Cattle.
5. Imported Cattle from East Indies.
6. Horses on a Ranch.
7. Drovers of Horses.
8. "Breaking" Horses.
9. "Roping Out" a Horse.
10. Putting a Saddle on an Unbroken Horse.
11. Riding an Unbroken Horse.

RANCH LIFE

TO most people the term Ranching presents a thrilling picture of a free, daring, picturesque "life in the open," subject oftentimes to severe hardships and dangers. Such, indeed, *was* the life of the ranchman and cowboy a generation ago, when "free range" still existed and great herds of cattle roamed over the vast grazing lands of the United States. To-day ranching, or more correctly speaking, stock raising, is carried on in a less spectacular and more practical way. Nevertheless, a glance at the conditions and customs of the not very remote past will be of interest, for they are interwoven with the country's development.

As an occupation, ranching doubtless had its beginnings with the Texas frontiersmen who, finding the cattle of the Mexicans roaming the plains, appropriated not only the *idea* of the industry but often the herds themselves. Evidences of the Spanish origin of the industry are noticeable in the names and implements used in the ranching "outfit." The "quirt," a short, flexible, riding whip; the highly important "lasso," now called the "rope"; the broad brimmed sombrero; the big, blunt spurs of the cowboy; and the very style of saddle—all these show Spanish origin. The term ranch itself is directly traceable to the Spanish word "rancho," meaning an estate.

No farther back than 1890 the entire middle section of this country, from Canada to Mexico, and from the Rocky Mountains nearly to the Mississippi River constituted almost limitless pasture land for thousands of cattle. At that time each ranchman owned but a small section of land; the boundless prairies were owned by the government, which granted "free range" for the herds of all ranches.

Cattle by thousands were turned out upon these immense pasture lands to shift for themselves during the drought of summer and the severities of winter. Grass, water, and shelter were the three requisites of a good cattle range. Water was necessary in the summer only, the snow supplying it in the winter; shelter, afforded either by dense woodland or breaks in the ground, was necessary in the winter only. Bitter winds, blinding snowstorms, and severe cold caused great losses in the numbers of cattle; only the sturdy survived.

In some parts of the plains vegetation was very sparse, and the ranchman had to guard against "over stocking," which meant too many head of cattle to a territory for the amount of pasturage. It was estimated that a range of country ten miles square would furnish sufficient pasturage for but three thousand head of cattle.

In May and October occurred the "round-ups." The spring "round-up," which was the more important of the two, usually occupied about six weeks, and was an arduous undertaking. The grazing territory was divided into districts and there were many ranches to a district. From each ranch started out a "round-up outfit" made up of one or two large wagons with food supplies and bedding. A teamster, a cook, and a dozen or so of cowboys, or "cow punchers," each having a "string" of 8 or 10 horses, completed the outfit. Every bit of prairie, every ravine and gorge, had to be traversed by these cowboys in order to locate the cattle and drive them back to the corral. This was often a trip of several weeks.

At the corral the animals having the same brand were "cut out" from the big herd and herded together. "Cutting out" cattle was a task requiring skill and patience. Clever cowboys on well trained ponies looked through the big herd, riding slowly so as not to alarm the cattle and

cause a stampede. When they found an animal bearing their ranchman's brand, it was slowly crowded out of the herd. "Cutting out" the steer was not the end of the task. When the animal found himself separated from the herd he became terrified and would start to run at top speed. It required expert, speedy riding on the part of the cowboy to keep the animal from getting away or tearing back into the main herd. The smaller groups and the big herd were each kept together by cowboys continually riding around them in circles.

Every ranchman had his own particular mark with which his cattle were branded on the hip, shoulder, or side, or on all three places. Since these brands were registered and every animal was inspected when shipped, there was little chance of stealing stock. The Seventy-six Bar (76) and the Quarter Circle Diamond (⊙) are types of the brands used by the "outfits." Often the brand was indistinct and needed close inspection; then it became necessary to "throw" the cow or steer. This was the cowboy's fun, each trying to outdo the other in speed and dexterity. Here the "rope" came into use. When the cowboy was on horseback, the rope with its loop at the end was thrown to catch the steer around the head or feet. After the animal was roped, both horse and rider had to brace themselves to withstand the shock of the throw. At the roundup the calves following a ranchman's cow were, of course, his property and had to be branded, amid much bleating, dust and confusion.

Another strenuous phase of former ranch life was the guarding of the rounded-up herd at night. This guarding time was divided into watches of two hours each. The cowboys having charge of the first watch had the hardest task, for it was their duty to "bed down" the herd, which consisted in riding around and around it until the cattle

finally lay down to sleep. For the remainder of the night it was necessary only to keep watch unless some unruly steer persisted in stirring up the herd, or a severe storm of wind and rain caused a stampede. In either case hard and dangerous work in the darkness was required to keep the herd together until morning, when it was again started on another day's drive nearer the shipping point.

These were the events incident to the ranch life of the former period. To-day it has lost much of the picturesque and daring. The great grazing lands are now owned in all sections by individuals; barbed wire fences make unnecessary the use of the branding iron, and the "round-up" is made each year largely in accordance with custom, rather than because of real necessity, as each ranchman keeps his cattle within his own enclosure.

Another advance in the cattle industry is now under way. In Texas the "long-horn" breed of cattle is no longer in favor. Ranchmen are now trying to produce an ideal breed that will be adapted to the sparse vegetation of Texas, and also heavier than the present breed. For this purpose strange looking but very hardy cattle from the East Indies have been imported.

An interesting branch of the business of ranching at present is horse raising. Great droves of horses are raised in the same manner as are the cattle. Living upon the plains summer and winter they, too, are "range raised" and "range fed." These horses become hardy and very wild and are not broken until they are wanted for shipment.

On the ranch a horse that is to be broken must be bridled and saddled by sheer force and then ridden until he is exhausted. First, however, the wild "range horse" must be roped and then thrown many times to teach him that he must not run with a rope. Next a "hackamore,"

or braided halter, is slipped over his head, a *very* heavy saddle is thrown unstrapped across his back, and the rider finally mounts. Then the struggle between man and animal begins; the horse striving by bucking, by rearing, and by plunging to throw the unwelcome rider. "Bronco busters" or "horse wranglers," as professional horse breakers are called, consider a horse "broken" when they have ridden it three times for an hour or two each time. Most ranchmen prefer to break their own horses, because they can do so with greater kindness and patience and thus improve the spirit and disposition of the animal and make them commercially more valuable.

QUESTIONS, TOPICS, SUGGESTIONS

1. Name the principal grazing states.
2. What is the leading grazing state in the United States? Why?
3. What is the meaning of "free range"?
4. Describe the "round-up"; branding.
5. How many head of cattle are received daily at the Chicago stock yards?
6. Why was the Texas "long-horn" an unsatisfactory breed?
7. Compare the business of raising horses to-day with that before the advent of the automobile.
8. Why is stock raising not a *large* industry among the farmers in other sections of the country?
9. Give the value of the cattle and horses raised in Oklahoma; in Texas; in New York State. (See reports Sec. of Agriculture.)

See Oklahoma State Fair reports upon ranching customs.

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